Prima
CLASSIC
VERDI
La Traviata
REBEKA • CASTRONOVO • PETEAN
LATVIAN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA
STATE CHOIR LATVIJA
MICHAEL BALKE

Tracklist

DISC 1

ACT 1

1. “Prelude” 3:37
2. “Dell’invito trascorsa è già l’ora” 4:51
3. “Libiamo ne’lieti calici” 2:55
4. “Che è ciò?” 2:17
5. “Un dì felice, eterea” 3:24
6. “Ebben? che diavol fate?” 1:13
7. “Si ridesta in ciel l’aurora” 1:39
8. “E strano!” - “Ah, fors’è lui” 6:35
9. “Follie! Delirio vano è questo!”-
   “Sempre libera” 4:57

ACT 2

10. “Lunge da lei” -
    “De’ miei bollenti spiriti” 3:44
11. “Annina, donde vieni?” -
    “Oh mio rimorso!” 3:48
12. “Alfredo?” “Per Parigi or or partiva” 4:11
13. “Pura siccome un angelo” 1:59
14. “Non sapete quale affetto” 2:05
15. “Un dì, quando le veneri” 2:52
16. “Ah! Dite alla giovine” 4:32
17. “Imponete” “Non amarlo ditegli” 5:00
18. “Dammi tu forza, o cielo!” 1:51
19. “Che fai?” “Nulla” 2:28
20. “Ah, vive sol quel core” 2:28
21. “Di Provenza il mar, il suol” 4:38
22. “Né rispondi d’un padre all’affetto?” -
    “No, non udrai rimproveri” 4:08

DISC 2

ACT 2

1. “Avrem lieta di maschere la notte” 1:02
2. “Noi siamo zingarelle” 2:24
3. “Di Madride noi siam mattadori” 2:46
4. “Alfredo! Voi!” 3:40
5. “Invitato a qui seguirmi” 2:38
6. “Ogni suo aver tal femmina” 1:40
7. “Di sprezzo degno se stesso rende” 2:00
8. “Alfredo, Alfredo, di questo core” 4:32

ACT 3

9. “Prelude” 3:36
10. “Annina?” “Comandate?” 4:34
11. “Addio del passato” 7:36
12. “Largo a quadrupede” 0:48
13. “Signora...” “Che t’accadde?” 1:30
14. “Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo” 4:32
15. “Ah, non più!” - “Ah! Gran Dio!
    Morir sì giovine” 4:42
16. “Ah, Violetta!” “Voi? Signor?” 1:45
17. “Prendi, quest’è l’immagine” 4:21

Marina Rebeka about Violetta Valéry

One of the most beautiful and challenging aspects of being an artist is reliving the same life story over and over again, each time deeply, truly, and differently, while performing the beloved role on stage. This is exactly how I feel when I perform the role of Violetta Valéry.

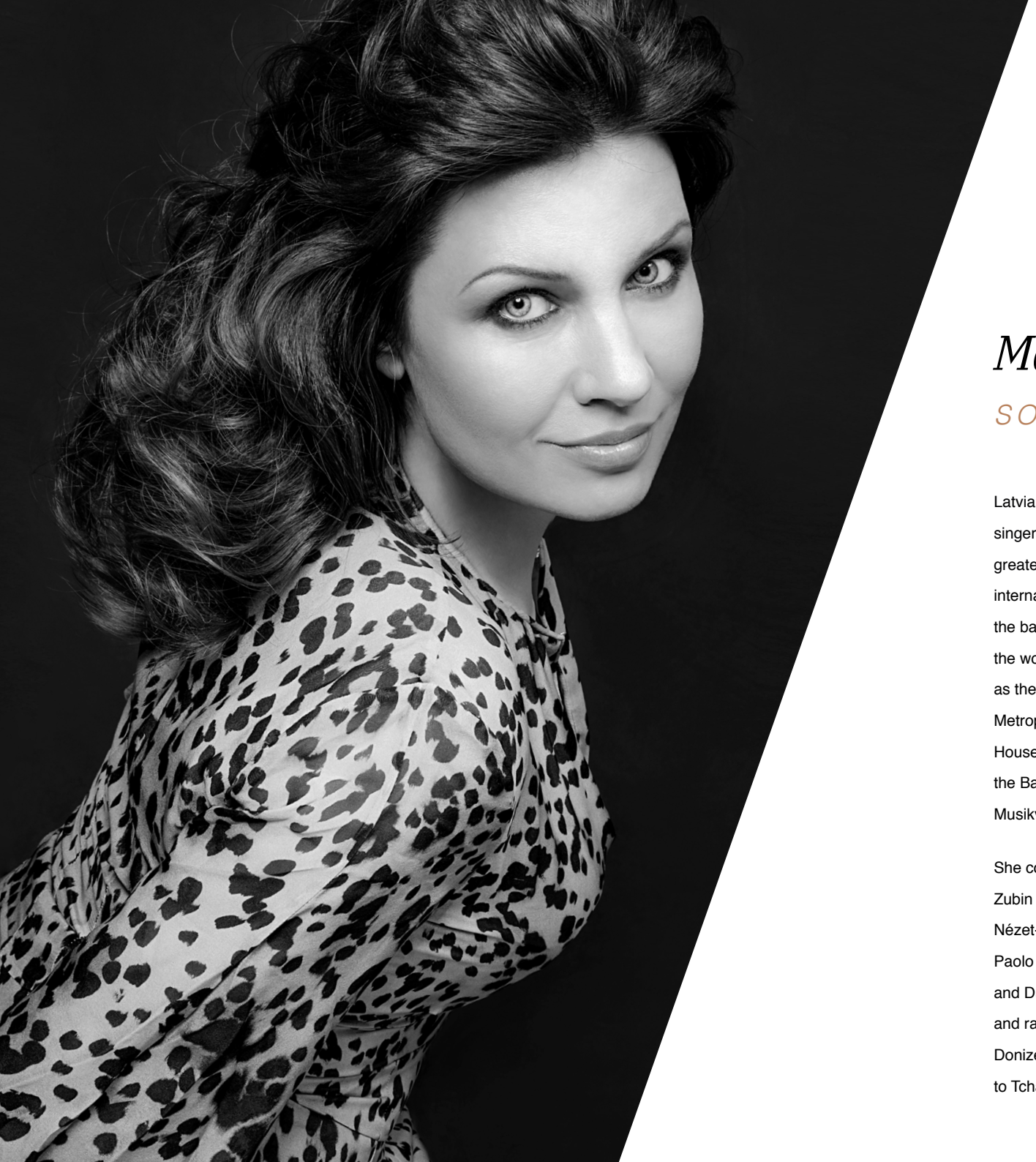
Verdi's opera *La Traviata* is based on Alexandre Dumas *fils'* novel *La Dame aux Camélias* (The Lady of the Camellias), in which the author describes his own experience of being in love with the famous Parisian courtesan Marie Duplessis (in the novel she is called Marguerite Gautier), who dies of tuberculosis at the age of 23 in complete poverty and loneliness after having mingled with some of the most prominent individuals of Parisian society. The novel was a huge success, and Dumas soon adapted it for the theater. It was after seeing the play that Maestro Giuseppe Verdi was moved to compose an opera, which he named *La Traviata* (The Fallen Woman). The story had some resemblance with his own personal life as well. After the death of his first wife, Verdi fell in love with the soprano Giuseppina Strepponi. They lived together for twelve years without being officially married, and, in the same way that a structured and hypocritical society had condemned (yet also enjoyed) people like Duplessis, they suffered criticism regarding their personal lives, especially Strepponi. Maybe it is because of this personal angle to the story that Verdi put so much love and understanding into his music, a passion and devotion that has moved – and continues to move – the hearts of thousands of listeners around the world.

The premiere of *La Traviata* took place in Venice and was a complete fiasco. The well-dressed, high-society ladies could not accept vate. The theme of the opera itself, apart from being taboo, was very unpleasant to society at the time due to its immediacy and truth. Contrary to most operas, this story was not set in a remote time and place; instead, it took place right there and then, and to people very much like those in the audience. Courtesans were intended for entertainment purposes only and were not considered worth talking about, much less highlighted on stage. Nevertheless, *La Traviata* became one of Verdi's most popular operas, if not his most popular one.

The story reveals the real, fragile life of a young, beautiful, and intelligent woman who, despite having had affairs with many high-society men, has never experienced real love herself. Once she does, however, she is ready to sacrifice everything she has, including her life, for the good of her beloved. *La Traviata* is a story of true love and complete devotion, in which the deepest of human feelings are set against the backdrop of a frivolous and hypocritical society.

Technically speaking, the role of Violetta is quite demanding. To begin with, it is very long, and it has fast coloraturas, beautiful legato lines, and lots of colors. It used to be said that three different types of voice are required to portray this role. I would say that you need just one voice, but a voice with many colors and shades, with big extension, technically prepared, and, above all, you need a huge heart and the will to play every show as if it were your last. At least that's the way I feel every time I approach the role of Violetta on stage.

Surely a studio recording is different from a live performance. Nevertheless, I hope that through this recording my wonderful colleagues and I will succeed in bringing to you all the truth and passion of this unique masterpiece by Verdi.



Marina Rebeka

SOPRANO

Latvian soprano Marina Rebeka is one of the leading opera singers of our time. She has gained a wide reputation as one of the greatest Verdi, Rossini, and Mozart singers in the world. Since her international breakthrough at the Salzburg Festival in 2009 under the baton of Riccardo Muti, Rebeka has been a regular guest at the world's most prestigious concert halls and opera houses, such as the Teatro alla Scala (Milan), the Opéra National de Paris, the Metropolitan Opera and Carnegie Hall (New York), the Royal Opera House Covent Garden (London), the Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), the Bavarian State Opera (Munich), the Vienna State Opera and the Musikverein (Vienna), and the Zurich Opera House, among others.

She collaborates with leading conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Zubin Mehta, Antonio Pappano, Valery Gergiev, Fabio Luisi, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Daniele Gatti, Marco Armiliato, Thomas Hengelbrock, Paolo Carignani, Myung-whun Chung, Kent Nagano, Ottavio Dantone, and Dan Ettinger. The variety of her repertoire is outstanding and ranges from Baroque (Händel), bel canto (Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti), and Verdi (*La Traviata, Simon Boccanegra, Il Trovatore*) to Tchaikovsky (*Eugene Onegin*) and Britten (*War Requiem*).

As an active and widely acclaimed concert performer, Rebeka has given recitals at the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, the Rudolfinum concert hall in Prague, St. John's Hall in London, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, and the Großes Festspielhaus in Salzburg and has participated in concerts at the Palau de la Música in Barcelona and the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden accompanied by such ensembles as the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, the Orchestra del Teatro Comunale di Bologna, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and the Filarmonici della Scala.

Rebeka has recorded Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* with the Orchestra of Santa Cecilia in Rome under Antonio Pappano for EMI (Warner Classics) in 2012. Her first solo CD, *Mozart Arias* with Speranza Scappucci and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, was released by EMI (Warner Classics) in November 2013. Her next album, *Amor fatale* – Rossini arias with Marco Armiliato and the Münchner Rundfunkorchester – was released in the autumn of 2017 by BR-Klassik. A recording of Verdi's *Luisa Miller* with Rebeka in the title role was released by BR-Klassik in spring 2018, and in summer 2018 Deutsche Grammophon released a recording of Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin and featuring Rebeka in the role of Vitellia. Her third solo album, *Spirito*, which includes the best-known scenes and arias of the dramatic bel canto repertoire, was released to critical acclaim under her own record label, Prima Classic, in November 2018.

Born in Riga, Rebeka began her musical studies in Latvia and continued in Italy, where she graduated from the Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia in Rome (2007). During her studies she also attended the Mozarteum International Summer Academy in Salzburg and the Rossini Academy in Pesaro. In the 2017/18 season, she was named the first-ever artist in residence by the Münchner Rundfunkorchester. In December 2016, Rebeka was granted the Order of the Three Stars, the highest award of the Republic of Latvia, for her cultural achievements.

www.marinarebeka.com

Charles Castronovo

TENOR

Acclaimed internationally as one of the finest lyric tenors of his generation, Charles Castronovo has sung at most of the world's leading opera houses, including the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Berlin State Opera, the Vienna State Opera, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Théâtre Royale de la Monnaie in Brussels, the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the San Francisco Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Castronovo's vast repertoire includes roles from the Baroque era (Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Gluck's *Alceste*), Mozart (*Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *La Clemenza di Tito*), bel canto (Cherubini's *Médée*, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor, L'elisir d'amore, Don Pasquale, Roberto Devereux*), French composers (Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* and *Faust*, Massenet's *Manon* and *Werther*, Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Bizet's *Carmen* and *Les pêcheurs de perles*, Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*), Verdi (*Falstaff*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Rigoletto*, *I Masnadieri*, *Don Carlo*), Puccini (*La Rondine*, *La Bohème*, *Madama Butterfly*), verismo (Boito's *Mefistofele*), and Russian opera repertoire (Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*). He performed the title role of Mario Ruoppolo in Daniel Catán's *Il Postino* at the work's world premiere with the Los Angeles Opera, opposite Plácido Domingo.

Castronovo has participated in many revivals of more rarely performed works. He starred as Mylio in the revival of Lalo's *Le roi d'Ys* in Toulouse, performed the role of Vincent in Gounod's *Mireille* at the Paris Opera, debuted at the Festival de Montpellier in Massenet's *Thérèse*, and sang concert performances of Gounod's opera *Cinq-Mars* at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna and the Royal Opera of Versailles, marking the work's first performance in well over a hundred years.

As a concert performer, Castronovo has performed with the Berlin Philharmonic as the protagonist in *La damnation de Faust* and sang his first Verdi *Requiem* at the Semperoper Dresden under Christian Thielemann and recently with John Eliot Gardiner and the London Symphony Orchestra in Paris. He also sang the Berlioz *Requiem* with Pierre Boulez and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Castronovo's recordings include Mercadante's Virginia (Opera Rara), Massenet's *Thérèse* and Lalo's *La Jacquerie* (Palazzetto Bru Zane). He also appears on the Spanish classical song album *Paris-Madrid* released by EMI (Warner Classics) in November 2018. His first solo album, *Dolce Napoli*, featuring well-known Neapolitan songs, was released in January 2013 by GPR Records.

www.charlescastronovo.com

George Petean

BARITONE

One of the most sought after Verdian baritones of our time, George Petean appears regularly at the major opera houses in the world, such as the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Zurich Opera House, the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, the Bavarian State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, the Deutsche Oper Berlin, the Semperoper Dresden, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Teatro alla Scala, the Teatro Comunale di Bologna, and others.

Petean studied piano, trombone, and singing at the Gheorghe Dima Music Academy in his native town of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. After graduation, he continued to study singing with Vicente Sardinero and Giorgio Zancanaro. His professional stage debut occurred in 1997 at the Romanian National Opera in Timișoara in the title role of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. In 1999, he won the Grand Prix at the Hariclea Darclée International Voice Competition in Romania and soon after made his international debut as Marcello in Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome. Between 2002 and 2010, Petean was a member of the Hamburg State Opera while also performing at some of the most prestigious opera houses in the world. He collaborated with renowned conductors such as Riccardo Muti, Riccardo Chailly, Zubin Mehta, Antonio Pappano, Paolo Carignani, Fabio Luisi, Marco Armiliato, Renato Palumbo, Christian Thielemann, and Nicola Luisotti.

Petean's repertoire is mainly based on Giuseppe Verdi's works, but it also includes roles from Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Bellini's *I Puritani* and *Il Pirata*, Puccini's *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, and Giordano's *Andrea Chénier*. A truly Verdian baritone, he was Riccardo Muti's *Simon Boccanegra* for the 2012/13 season opening at Teatro dell'Opera in Rome as well as Riccardo Chailly's Ezio in Verdi's *Attila* at the Teatro alla Scala for the 2018/19 season opening.

Petean recorded Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz* alongside Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna, released by Deutsche Grammophon in 2009. His performance of the title role in Donizetti's *Le Duc d'Albe*, conducted by Paolo Carignani at the Vlaamse Opera in Antwerp and released by Dynamic, was the world premiere recording of this opera. Later on, he recorded the role of Miller in Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, released by BR-Klassik in the spring of 2018.

Petean's DVD recordings include Verdi's *Il Trovatore* live from the Chorégies d'Orange opera festival in 2015; Verdi's *Rigoletto* at the Zurich Opera House, conducted by Fabio Luisi, also in 2015; Verdi's *Un ballo* in maschera, led by Zubin Mehta and released by Unitel in March 2017; and Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* alongside Jonas Kaufmann and Anja Harteros live at the Bavarian State Opera, released by Unitel in 2017.

Michael Balke

CONDUCTOR

Equally at home in the symphonic and opera repertoire, the young German conductor Michael Balke is quickly gaining international attention for his performances. He regularly accepts invitations to many European countries as well as Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States. Balke was born in Braunschweig and received a full scholarship for his musical education at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, where he studied piano with James Tocco, conducting with Christopher Zimmerman, and chamber music with the Tokyo String Quartet, the LaSalle Quartet, and Menahem Pressler. After extended activity in chamber music and as a Lied pianist, he devoted himself entirely to conducting.

Balke lived in Italy from 2007 to 2011, where he assisted Riccardo Frizza at the Maggio Musicale in Florence and in Verona. In 2011 he became the principal conductor of the Magdeburg Opera, where he conducted a broad repertoire of new productions from Mozart, Rossini, and Donizetti to Verdi, Stravinsky, Korngold, and Richard Strauss as well as numerous symphony concerts. Highlights of this period include *Der Rosenkavalier* and a new production of Richard Strauss' *Elektra*.

At the same time, Balke accepted international invitations as a guest conductor: Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at the Teatro Grande in Brescia and in Como, Cremona, and Pavia; *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Staatstheater Kassel; *La Traviata* (production by Achim Freyer) at the Nationaltheater Mannheim; a new production of *La Bohème* at the Danish National Opera; and *L'Heure Espagnole / Gianni Schicchi* for the 2016 season opening at the Opéra National de Lorraine in Nancy.

In 2015 Balke made his debut in Japan with the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo and the Osaka Philharmonic Orchestra and toured with Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Recent engagements include his debut in Sweden with *Der Fliegende Holländer* and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, new productions of *Tosca* and Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten* at the Theater St. Gallen in Switzerland, symphony concerts with the Copenhagen Philharmonic and the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, and his US debut with the Sarasota Orchestra in Florida featuring Midori. He has performed with the Munich Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, the Residentie Orkest Den Haag at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, and with the Cologne Chamber Orchestra and Jean-Yves Thibaudet at the Tongyeong Festival in South Korea.

Balke regularly collaborates with singers such as Ludovic Tézier, Lawrence Brownlee, Ian Bostridge, and Marina Rebeka, with whom he gave concerts in Zagreb with the Croatian Radio Orchestra, in Munich with the Munich Radio Orchestra, and at the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow.

Balke was recently named principal guest conductor of the St. Gallen Theater and Symphony Orchestra (Switzerland), starting his tenure in the 2018/19 season.

www.michaelbalke.com

Latvian Festival Orchestra

The Latvian Festival Orchestra (LFO) is a new organization that combines a select group of musicians from various Latvian symphony and chamber orchestras. LFO's first performance took place in late 2015, together with soprano Marina Rebeka and Italian conductor Speranza Scappucci as part of the concert series for the inauguration of Great Amber, a new concert hall in the Latvian city of Liepāja.

In 2017, LFO and American conductor John Fiore toured in Latvia performing the concert version of Gaetano Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* in the country's largest concert halls, with Rebeka in the title role. In the summer of that same year, they played Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* with Karel Mark Chichon on the podium. The concert was honored with the 2017 Liepāja Culture Award as well as the 2017 Kilogram of Culture award presented by Latvian public television and radio for most significant musical performance of the year.

In 2017 and 2018, LFO performed at the Dzintari Concert Hall with Elīna Garanča and other outstanding musicians; these concerts were also conducted by Chichon, now an important partner of the Latvian Festival Orchestra. In 2018, LFO performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and at the Šalc classical music festival in Liepāja, Ventspils, and Cēsis along with Rebeka and the young Latvian conductor Guntis Kuzma.

Since its recent inception, the Latvian Festival Orchestra has performed alongside Marina Rebeka (soprano), Hibla Gerzmava (soprano), Elīna Garanča (mezzo-soprano), Rame Lahaj (tenor), Bülent Bezdüz (tenor), Charles Castronovo (tenor), George Petean (baritone), Joshua Bell (violin), Sergey Krylov (violin), David Geringas (cello), Denis Matsuev (piano), and others.

This album of *La Traviata* marks the orchestra's recording debut.

www.labamuzika.lv

State Choir Latvija

The State Choir Latvija is one of the brightest stars on the Latvian cultural scene. Its musical radiance – complete with a warm, refined, and perfect vocal instrumentation and the specific sound of the Latvian choral tradition – is renowned worldwide. As the largest professional choir in the Baltic states, it regularly performs with some of the world's most prominent conductors and orchestras. The vocal skill of the 52 to 80 choir members makes the choir a powerful instrument capable of expressing many musical textures, from subtle a cappella pieces to grand vocal symphonies accompanied by a triple orchestra.

The choir has collaborated with institutions such as the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Bavarian Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Gustav Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Over the course of the choir's history, it has performed under conductors Mariss Jansons, Andris Nelsons, Neeme Järvi, Paavo Järvi, Vladimir Ashkenazy, David Zinman, Valery Gergiev, Zubin Mehta, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Tõnu Kaljuste, and many others.

Among the highest achievements in the choir's history is the cooperation with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and its conductor Mariss Jansons, in which the choir participated in the world tour dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the orchestra. Other highlights include the celebration of the 150th anniversary of first performance of Brahms' *Requiem* (Paavo Järvi conducting the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen with the State Choir Latvija and soloists); the performance of Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 8* at the Elbphilharmonie Concert Hall in collaboration with the Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra; participation in the concert dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mariss Jansons; and the concerts of Baltic choral music conducted by Māris Sirmais at Lincoln Center and the Baryshnikov Arts Center in New York City.

The State Choir Latvija appears on many recordings, both solo albums and in collaboration with other artists. Its albums have been released by a variety of labels in many different countries.

Since 1997, the artistic director and chief conductor of the choir is Māris Sirmais and its general manager is Māris Ošlejs.

www.koris.lv

Credits

Conductor - **MICHAEL BALKE**

LATVIAN FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

STATE CHOIR LATVIJA

CAST:

Violetta Valéry - **MARINA REBEKA**

Alfredo Germont - **CHARLES CASTRONOVO**

Giorgio Germont - **GEORGE PETEAN**

Flora Bervoix - **ELIZABETH SERGEEVA**

Gastone de Letorières - **GIDEON POPPE**

Marchese d'Obigny - **ISAAC GALÁN**

Barone Douphol - **RIHARDS MOČANOVSKIS**

Dottore Grenvil - **KRIŠJĀNIS NORVELIS**

Annina - **LAURA GRECKA**

Giuseppe, domestico di Flora - **MICHAILS ČULPAJEVS**

Commissionario - **LUCA MARTONI**

Produced by **SOPHIE RAYNAUD** and **MARINA REBEKA**

Executive Producers: **EDGARDO VERTANESSIAN** and **MARINA REBEKA**

Recording, Editing, Mixing, and Mastering: **EDGARDO VERTANESSIAN**

Recording Assistant: **JOE HARLING**

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George Petean: **FLORINA PETEAN**

Michael Balke: **KARTAL KARAGEDIK**

Latvian Festival Orchestra: **FLORINA PETEAN**

State Choir Latvia: **ĢIRTS RAĢELIS**

Recording sessions: **FLORINA PETEAN**

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